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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS FR 002153

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TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [PREL](#) [EG](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL RACE - COMMENTS BY JAPANESE  
AMBASSADOR

REF: PARIS FR 2144

Classified by Charge Stephen Engelken, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During a recent meeting with UNESCO'S Japanese Ambassador, UNESCO'S Egyptian Ambassador learned that the Government of Japan will insist on supporting the strongest candidate for the UNESCO position of Director General, regardless of where that individual comes from. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Japanese Ambassador to UNESCO, Tadamichi Yamamoto told Ambassador Oliver that on November 21 he met the Egyptian Ambassador to UNESCO, Shadia Kenawy, at her request, to discuss the race for the position of UNESCO'S next Director General. Ambassador Yamamoto said that Ambassador Kenawy seemed very tense during the meeting. He recalled that the Egyptian Ambassador began the meeting by asking his thoughts on the progress of the campaign. The Japanese Ambassador responded by saying that the Government of Japan (GOJ) was following the campaign closely, and was in the process of assessing the strengths of the current candidates for the UNESCO position. He added that the GOJ would like to see more good candidates enter the race, as the GOJ wanted the best possible person to become the next Director General of UNESCO. Ambassador Yamamoto also said that the GOJ would look for a candidate who supported the reforms done by the current Director General, and that it would make no firm decision on any candidate until it saw the entire field of candidates.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Kenawy then asked whether the GOJ believed in the principle of rotation for the position of Director General. Ambassador Yamamoto said that the GOJ respected the desire of regions that had never had a Director General to have one, but that for the GOJ, the quality of the candidate was more important than the region that individual came from. The Egyptian Ambassador asked whether the Asia-Pacific region would have a candidate. After the Japanese Ambassador said probably not, the Egyptian Ambassador asked whether the GOJ would support a candidate from Group 1, the North American and Western European Electoral Group. The Japanese Ambassador repeated his previous comments about wanting the best candidate possible, and said that the GOJ would welcome candidates from all regions. (Comment: When Ambassador Oliver asked the Japanese Ambassador if there was in fact a Group 1 candidate, he said that he had heard that there might be an Italian candidate. Although Italy is the largest extra-budgetary donor to UNESCO after Brazil, this was the first time that we have heard this information. It would need to be confirmed before we could give it any serious consideration. End Comment)

¶4. (C) The Egyptian Ambassador then said that their candidate, Egyptian Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni, had received strong support from the Arab League, and from many African Culture Ministers, though not yet from the African Union itself. Ambassador Yamamoto responded by telling the Egyptian Ambassador that he had learned that some important countries had serious concerns about Mr. Hosni, and that he would have to look into those concerns carefully. He added that he had been told that these concerns had nothing to do with Egypt or with the Arab region. Ambassador Yamamoto then asked the Egyptian Ambassador whether Mr. Hosni's candidacy had been formalized yet. The Egyptian Ambassador said no, and immediately ended the meeting. The Japanese Ambassador told Ambassador Oliver

that he was sure that the Egyptian Ambassador understood what was being said which was why she did not want to hear anything more, as she did not want to have to report negative information back to Cairo. Mission has also heard that Cairo does not want to hear negative reports on Mr. Hosni's candidacy, as the Egyptians have worked very hard for the past year to try to make Mr. Hosni's election seem inevitable. Concerns about Mr. Hosni now being expressed by key countries are clearly making the Egyptian Ambassador very nervous, which is why Ambassador Yamamoto ended his conversation with Ambassador Oliver by saying he was starting to feel sorry for the Egyptian Ambassador.

ENGELKEN